

# Terrarium

JR Rhine

*This is why you never see your father cry.*

-IDLES

A man who once went thru  
the proper channels to be my uncle  
he had a ponytail and he could  
ollie on a skateboard  
and he owned a reptile store  
from which he sold many  
scaly creatures  
he kept glass houses in his garage  
and an iguana cage in his bedroom  
and behind his store was the warehouse  
in which he kept the milieu of rodents  
and even the bathtub in a room  
housed a baby alligator who hissed  
and he let me hold the snakes, the lizards  
skin to scale, fingers to claws  
and one day I held the Rainbow Boa  
known for its luminescent skin  
its sleek orange body festooned in blue circles  
dazzling under the warm light  
it coiled around his strong hairy wrist  
its diamond-shaped head  
black eyes and wispy tongue  
cautious before my floating hand  
zap! a flash of pain  
between thumb and forefinger  
my uncle swearing, myself blind-teared and  
jerking away  
hand bleeding profusely  
he dug the fangs out and I ran to the  
bathroom  
to let the sink spill onto the pinprick holes  
my uncle muffled behind the door

prison, I've been told  
can exist within the mind  
scream  
as if to prove oneself a man  
kept always under searing light  
facades  
unsure of their own design  
others in the mind  
where the magic happens  
stored in a construct  
squirming in the palms  
desperate to be a flower  
inside a cell  
whispering its cold truth  
with a familiar touch  
in a bible somewhere  
grinning in the sun  
gleaming like a hula hoop  
on a naked body  
which has to be strong  
diamond-cased heart  
with all its prodded lust  
desperate to be a flower  
knowing well the distance  
to original sin  
deaf to the words  
jerking off in  
a James Bond fantasy once  
gender neutral  
where it's quiet enough  
to let hair and skin whisper to  
all the gods who are hairless

and the venom entering my body